

FACES IN THE NEWS

Walking on the Moon is a Buzz



BUZZ Aldrin walked on the moon 40 years ago. Now he's celebrating with some moon tunes performed by the Boston Pops.

The celebration includes singalongs of the standards Blue Moon, It's Only a Paper Moon, Moon River and Fly Me to the Moon.

Aldrin was the second man to walk on the moon, following Neil Armstrong on July 20, 1969.

Cher's daughter has sex change



CHASTITY BONO, the daughter of Cher, is having a sex change.

Bono began the sex-change process to become a man earlier this year, her spokesman said.

Publicist Howard Bragman said Bono was proud of the decision.

The 40-year-old writer, activist and reality television star revealed 20 years ago that she was gay.

Miley Cyrus to play UK concerts



TEEN pop star Miley Cyrus has announced dates for her first UK concerts as

she continues to build a pop career in her own right rather than as her alter-ego Hannah Montana.

Cyrus, 16, who plays a schoolgirl with a secret identity as Hannah Montana in the Disney series and movie, will perform two nights at London's O2 Arena on December 13 and 14.

Prince wins barracks' battle



The Prince of Wales has won his battle to get the developers of Chelsea Barracks to drop their modernist design for the project.

The Middle East owners announced they have withdrawn planning application, less than a week before it was due to be considered by planning chiefs.

The decision follows intervention by the Prince.

HIDDEN TOMB IS REVEALED

We get sneak look at the Egyptian Halls, which are set for a £6.5m overhaul



By GRAEME MURRAY

THE owners of one of Glasgow's most important A-listed architectural treasures have warned that time is running out to save it.

Work has started trying to salvage the crumbling fabric of the semi-derelict Egyptian Halls in Union Street after decades of disputes over its ownership.

The A-listed Alexander 'Greek' Thomson building has stood still while almost 30 years have passed.

And decades of decay have taken its toll on the historic building's structure.

But now owners have finally been allowed to start rescuing the 136-year-old treasure and transforming it into a £6.5million retail, office or hotel scheme.

Scaffolding has been erected on the outside of the building and the painstaking process has started to restore its stonework, windows, roof and the ironwork supporting its blackened façade.

Underneath the decades of fumes,

dirt and grime on the outside of the building hides Thomson's ornate frontage, thought to be among the architect's finest work.

But inside, the building is a shell, full of rubble and decaying plaster which latterly housed a Chinese restaurant and an Inland Revenue training centre.

Derek Souter's Dundee-based firm Union Street Properties has been involved with the halls for 11 years but, because of legal issues over ownership, only took possession of the building last year.

Now he is hopeful the firm can salvage the halls with a huge investment after years of neglect.

But after the Evening Times was given an exclusive tour of the four-floor property, Mr Souter warned time is running out to save the historic halls.

He said: "It's more or less been

empty since 1982. It's not in any danger of falling down but there is internal deterioration and water ingress and you reach a cut-off point where something has to be done.

"There are a few options for it and we are looking at offices, retail or hotel use because of its prime location.

"Given its proximity to Central Station it would seem a great location for a hotel.

"We are keeping it wind and watertight and managing the deterioration when we can but we are aware there are ground floor traders and their trade is paramount in our

consideration." The derelict four-storey halls were built in 1873 and are now reached via a shuttered door at pavement level opposite the side entrance to Central Station.

From there, a steep, dimly-lit staircase leads you to the first floor.

The decay of the interior is immediately noticeable and the halls' time as a restaurant is still evident with Chinese characters on its dusty windows and crimson flock wallpaper desperately trying to cling to its walls.

A caged liftshaft occupies the stairwell leading to the top floor and climbing the stairs gets increasingly precarious as holes become more evident.



After almost 30 years of neglect, the restoration work required inside the Egyptian Halls is apparent, but it's a challenge owner Derek Souter, left, is prepared to face

None of Thomson's architectural brilliance can be seen from inside and there is no evidence of the original use as a shopping bazaar and exhibition space.

But from the roof you can see some of the ornate frontage of the building. Architects the Morrison Partnership have been charged with coming up with a scheme to transform the halls.

The £6.5m development is the culmination of 11 years of investment which has finally secured 100% ownership of the halls.

And it's believed the halls' restoration will be the catalyst for transforming the rest of Union Street.

Architect George Morrison said: "The current outward appearance is so dirty and forlorn that I guess the building does not register with most of the passing public.

"Behind 30 years worth of soot, grime and bird droppings, however, resides one of the most striking facades in Glasgow."

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Cancelled wedding battle lost

Couple ordered to pay £3000 to lochside hotel

A COUPLE have been ordered to pay £3000 to a luxury hotel after cancelling their wedding due to "hidden costs".

John and Helen Lindsay, from Tollcross, Glasgow, were planning a big white wedding at The Lodge on Loch Lomond in Luss but called it off after they were told they would have to pay £600 extra to host the ceremony there.

The couple - who finally wed at the Bothwell Bridge Hotel - expected to lose just a £500 deposit but a clause in the hotel's contract meant they were liable for half of the total cost.

The lodge, whose famous guests have included Bill Clinton and George Bush Sr, had initially demanded almost £5000 from the couple.

This was to cover costs including potential bar takings and rooms that might have been booked by their guests.

But in a written judgment lodged at Glasgow Sheriff Court yesterday, Sheriff Sean Murphy ordered the couple to pay £3000, plus the hotel's legal expenses.

Sheriff Murphy said: "Mrs Lindsay claimed the hotel's presentation of the wedding package details had been misleading from the start.

"She summed it up with these words 'they want to get your money and say we'll deal with things later'.

"However, I accept the couple failed to appreciate the full implications of the bargain.

"It must have been plain to them that charges beyond that of the deposit itself were due in the event of cancellation."

The sheriff added he would not make the couple pay for the hotel's estimated bar charges and room bookings.

The couple approached the hotel in late 2006 to

She claimed the details were misleading from the start

book their wedding for September 2007, taking the venue's premium Macmillan package and paying a £500 deposit.

In January 2007 they were sent a copy of the hotel's standard wedding contract, signed it and returned it to the hotel.

When they were later told about an extra £600 fee they cancelled.

The couple received an invoice for £4931 in July 2008. They offered to pay £2000 but the hotel refused to accept this.

Wind farm to create £200m

A GIANT wind farm will generate orders worth more than £200million for firms in Scotland, the First Minister has said.

The 152-turbine farm to be built near Abingdon, in Lanarkshire, will be the single biggest wind farm to have been given consent in Europe.

Alex Salmond hailed the potential for firms when he visited the site to see preparatory work.

The project will cost £500m, and the £200m-worth of contracts will include a £10m order for Machrihanish-based Welcon Towers to supply turbine towers, helping to secure 100 jobs.

The farm, to be developed by Scottish and Southern Energy, will generate enough power for about 200 homes.

SSE said it will provide at least 100 jobs in its construction phase and 30 in its operational life.

Mr Salmond said: "The sheer scale of the Clyde wind farm reflects Scotland's ambition and ability to become the clean, green energy capital of Europe.

"Scotland boasts a clear competitive advantage in the development of clean, green energy sources with 25% of Europe's offshore wind and tidal power."